

PEOPLE & THINGS

MANY first-class minds outside our Intelligence Services have continued to brood over the Burgess and Maclean case as one might brood over an unfinished detective story, and I am sure there are many valuable clues and interesting deductions lying hidden in untapped minds all over the country.

As an example, one of our great scholars, who is also an expert on Russian literature, told me last week that Burgess has for some time unquestionably been editor of the English edition of "Soviet Union," the expensively produced "Life" type of periodical published in seven languages. This man knew Burgess's mind, his prose style and the touch of madness that was in his thought processes, and he has been recognising traces of the same intellect in the normally flat and uninspired propaganda prose of "Soviet Union."

In case the Foreign Office is interested, the Managing Editor is P. N. Kusnezov and the address of the magazine is: Moscow K-9, Uliza Moskwina 8.

Bashibazook

MY colleague Ian Fleming, lately returned from the Sublime Porte by way of the Orient Express and the Dover Packet, complains that the Istanbul censor out a particularly dramatic scene out of his report on the riots.

This was a battle to the death between two saloon cars on the famous Taksim Square. They fought by the light of the moon like bulls, says Fleming, charging each other head on, then pulling away with a sound of rending metal, and crashing in again amidst a spray of broken glass.

Finally the steering gear of one car apparently jammed and it tore out of control into the crowds while the victor, with horn braying, dashed off in search of a further opponent.

Story No. 1,002

WHEN Ian Fleming described the scene to a Turkish friend the next day, he was told that this particular form of battle originated in Saudi Arabia.

There, to relieve the tedium of thinking of new ways of spending their millions, rich oil-sheiks challenge each other to duels with their latest American cars.

When stakes have been agreed, two sheiks will choose a flat piece of desert and climb, one into his new Cadillac and the other into his new Packard, and face each other across twenty-five yards of sand.

Then, with the engines at maximum revs, they release the handbrakes and charge each other head on.

When the smoke has cleared away, amidst scenes of wild hilarity and enthusiasm the damage is carefully assessed, the money paid and a match put to the petrol tanks of the wrecked motor-cars.

Turkish Dismay

INCIDENTALLY, our special correspondent's despatch from Istanbul has yielded the following sharp letter to the Editor, signed "Mannon" and post-marked Ankara:

"Sir,
"When you write about four thousand Sultan's eunuchs, had you any idea who has made the statistic? First of all, every body had eunuchs, all the wealthy houses. In the Sultan's harem, there were often twenty, how money battlers you have now in Bakinham

By ATTICUS

Palace? In writing like that you are making the propaganda, the living propaganda of modern turks. The Palaces where fabulists in Istanbul, wat have you seen in visiting Istanbul, compare them with your own of England. You europeans are terrible and badly intended speaking of us. And you want peace? on world!"

An Inscrutable Answer

IN touching some months ago on the history of Paddington Pollaky, the greatest private detective of the Victorian era, I did not expect to start something whose reverberations would extend not merely throughout the world as we know it, but into Limbo as well.

I learn, however, from Dr. Emmart, Pollaky's intending biographer, that a group of American Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts, disturbed by the increase in Pollaky's fame, decided last month to secure a direct answer from the shade of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the question of whether or not Pollaky had helped him to write the Holmes stories.

A seance was duly held, and the dread question put.

"He was there" came the Delphic answer; and the little group retired baffled—as, for that matter, do I myself.



A Sinister Train

THE dramatic and most welcome announcement of the Russian surrender of their leased base at Porkkala will mean the withdrawal from service of the famous "Iron Curtain Train" of the Finnish State Railways between Turku and Helsinki.

The Soviet authorities allowed this train to run through the Porkkala zone on condition that it was sealed with iron shutters throughout the journey and was hauled by a Russian locomotive. On a recent journey through the zone, on a fine, calm day, the train was suddenly brought to a stop by hurricane winds and a violent trembling on the permanent way which terrified the incarcerated passengers.

On reaching the Finnish frontier the iron shutters slid down to show the same calm conditions that had been experienced at the beginning of the journey.

Incidents of this kind during this fourteen-mile journey, which the Finns call "The longest tunnel in Europe," have given rise to sinister tales of atomic experiments being undertaken in the Porkkala zone.

Skol!

NEXT Saturday will be a great day in Sweden. After fifty-five years, Prohibition is to end—with the only proviso that shons

will be forbidden to sell wines and spirits at the same counter as they sell beer, for otherwise a beer drinker might be tempted to buy gin. It has also been decreed that all bottles must be displayed horizontally so that their tempting labels cannot be read.

Hitherto the restrictions on the sale of strong drink were extremely complicated. For instance, women were sold only one-and-a-half ounces of spirits before 3 p.m. and two ounces after that hour, and at restaurants, to prevent cheating "ladies' portions" were served in glasses of a different shape from "male" glasses.

With a coveted Motbok, a citizen could obtain a monthly ration based upon his "alcoholic capacity"—card-indexed according to his marital status, moral conduct, etc. Thus a spinster of over thirty-five could obtain only one-and-a-half pints of liquor per month while the head of a family was awarded five pints.

Prohibition is being abandoned because it led to illicit traffic in Motboks and to other black-market practices, and because it induced Swedes to drink the maximum quantity whenever they got a chance. As a result they became the greatest per capita consumers of spirits in the world.

It is safe to prophesy that this record will not be endangered over next week-end.

Greasepaint Economics

THE long-awaited "Punch Revue" opens at the Duke of York's Theatre on Wednesday after a short but triumphant run in Southsea and Brighton.

Readers of THE SUNDAY TIMES will be particularly interested to see the curtain go up on a sketch by George Schwartz, one of the galaxy of fresh talent recruited by Miss Vida Hope who has been at work on the revue since she finished producing "The Boy Friend."

George Schwartz is keeping the subject of his sketch a secret even from his friends, but a spy in Brighton tells me that the scene is domestic and the subject inflation, and that the dialogue is as tart and pointed as one might expect.

Herd that Beast!

IN plenty of time for the Motor Show, I append an up-to-the-minute glossary of motoring terms current among the experts. Appropriate usage will command respect at the stands:

Beast—Car with fast getaway.

Goat—The other fellow's car.

Gook Wagon—Car loaded with ornaments; nothing much under bonnet.

Mother Head—Terrific. A real bomb of a car.

Chopped Top—Car with its hood lowered.

Lokester—Special body without bumpers.

Getting a Bite—Tyres hold traction during acceleration.

Breaking loose—Tyres do not hold. Smoke out of the Chute—Accelerate with tyres spinning.

Herd—To drive a car.

Neri—To chase another car.

Prune—To beat another car.

Jug—Carburettor.

Pot—Cylinder.

Pot Out—Engine failure.

Stick a foot in the Pot—Open throttle wide

Dear Sir

FROM a bank manager to a customer:

"I very much regret that, owing to the irksome restrictions placed upon us by the Government, I am unable to accept your kind offer to increase your present very remunerative overdraft."